

March 2008

Dear Friend,

Tennessee is a state rich in valuable water resources. We rely on our rivers, streams and lakes for everything from recreation to irrigation to drinking water supplies. Our smallest headwater streams drain into larger and larger water bodies, and the land areas that drain into these waters, both large and small, make up our watersheds. Ultimately, every watershed in Tennessee, except the Conasauga River in the Southeast part of the state, drains into the Mississippi River.

Protecting our waters is most effective when we take a watershed approach. To this end, on Earth Day 2007 the Department of Environment and Conservation and the Department of Transportation announced a joint project to place watershed signs along roadways across Tennessee. These signs are designed to increase public awareness regarding the importance of watersheds, and to encourage good stewardship of the state's valuable rivers, streams, wetlands, lakes and groundwater. As we lead up to Earth Day 2008, we're pleased to announce we're nearing completion of this project. The signs are up and sign placement is being checked by both agencies to verify that all signs are correct and correctly placed.

The green watershed signs are located at various points of entry to 55 watersheds throughout Tennessee. Each watershed has two or more signs, depending on its geographic location and the number of major highways entering the watershed. The two departments split the cost of these watershed signs, which totaled approximately \$280,000.

The watershed names used on the signs reflect those used by Environment and Conservation in its watershed management system and are consistent with the naming system utilized by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and dozens of watershed organizations across the state. Typically, these names are based on the main feature in the watershed to provide more precise information and to avoid confusion. For example, the Cumberland River runs nearly 700 miles and the entire Cumberland River Basin covers about 18,000 square miles. It is comprised of 14 different watersheds, including Lake Barkley, Cheatham Lake and Old Hickory on the main stem of the Cumberland and the Harpeth River, Stones River and Red River watersheds as tributaries.

The departments of Transportation and Environment and Conservation are pleased we could work together on such a positive project. We hope the new watershed signs will help even more people recognize that what we put in our yards, throw from our cars and the rainfall that washes across our parking lots all have a significant impact on the waters we rely on and enjoy. We invite all Tennesseans to work with us to protect our watersheds and the vital resources that are contained within.



Paul Sloan, Deputy Commissioner
Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation